School of Medicine Guidelines for Internal Proposal Submission Timelines

Purpose:

The SOM Office of Research Administration expects all faculty be aware of and make every effort to adhere to internal timelines for proposal submission. Adhering to timelines will help ensure university policy is followed and allow staff supporting proposal submissions sufficient time to provide the best support possible to investigators. This guidance applies to all proposal submissions with sponsor published deadlines.

The guidelines outline expectations for timeliness in two areas of proposal development:

  I.   Timely routing of proposals in RAMS-SPOT for school-level and institutional approval
 II.   Timely notification of staff for administrative support to aid PIs in developing the administrative and financial components of an application and routing it on-time

Background:

VCU's Division of Sponsored Programs (DSP) in the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation maintains VCU's policy on [Sponsored Programs Proposal Submission Deadlines](). VCU uses RAMS-SPOT, an electronic proposal/award management system, to manage the proposal routing and approval process.

The policy noted above states that all proposals with sponsor deadlines must be received by DSP 5 business days prior to the sponsor published deadline. VCU DSP requires that schools (Dean or designee) approve outgoing extramural proposal submissions *prior to* their arrival for final review and institutional approval by VCU DSP. When a Principal Investigator (PI) routes a proposal for institutional approval in RAMS-SPOT, it first goes to each participating school for approval, and then to VCU DSP once all school level approvals are received.

PIs often work with research administrators or other staff on the administrative and financial components of a proposal submission. This includes preparation and finalization of the required proposal components in the RAMS-SPOT system *prior to* the PI routing the submission for institutional approval.

Allowing sufficient time for research administration and other staff to support PIs in application preparation is essential. Strong time management is also essential to allow sufficient time for all needed school level approvals to be received, so that VCU DSP has 5 business days to review submissions prior to sponsor deadlines.

I. __SOM Guidance: PI Routing of Proposals Submissions__

The School of Medicine Office of Research Administration reviews and approves all outgoing proposal submissions involving SOM personnel in RAMS-SPOT on behalf of the Dean.

- __Proposal must be routed by PI 7 business days prior to sponsor deadline__

    o Allow 2 business days for school review and approval; includes all schools involved.
    o Allow 5 business days for DSP review per institutional policy.
    o Required elements to route:
        - Final budget and budget narrative; including any cost share
        - Draft science
        - All critical proposal elements as defined by DSP's "SOFEW" guidance must be in place and final/approved by appropriate parties at point of routing. (see "SOFEW" section below)
        - All financial requests for waived or reduced F&A, voluntary cost share, institutional support, etc. must be documented and final/approved by appropriate parties. (see Section II. below)
    o In the rare instance a proposal is due on a weekend, Investigators must plan for their submission to be submitted to the sponsor by 5pm on the Friday prior to the weekend deadline (routing 7 business days prior to Friday before weekend deadline).

- __Final Science is due 2 business days prior to sponsor deadline__

    o Final science and all other proposal documents should be uploaded in RAMS-SPOT and be considered final.

- __PIs are responsible for ensuring timely routing of proposals.__ Failure to follow this proposal routing timeline guidance could impact the proposal submission. Examples of impacts include:
    o Proposals not being submitted, or submitted after a sponsor published deadline.
        - Per VCU policy: Proposals are reviewed in the order they are received as compared to other proposals with the same deadline date.
        - SOM reserves the right to disapprove proposals where insufficient time is allowed for preparation and internal approvals.
    o SOM and DSP may have insufficient time for a thorough review, increasing the chances of *not* identifying and correcting issues; which could result in proposals being administratively rejected by sponsors.

__VCU DSP "SOFEW" Criteria:__

__The VPRI Division of Sponsored Programs asks that we please remember "SOFEW"; the key elements below are expected to be final when a PI routes for school and university level approval.__ Staff supporting PIs to ensure these items are complete need sufficient lead time to do so.

__SOFEW__ refers to:

- **S** ubaward mini packages **signed** by proposed subawardee Authorized Official. If subaward packages are not signed at routing the PI/RA/Dept must include a comment in SPOT to provide status. SOM will return Funding Proposals where there is no explanation provided.
- **O** ther support (if needed at proposal time). If Other Support is required and missing at the point of routing, SOM will return the Funding Proposal if there is no explanatory comment in RAMS-SPOT from PI/RA/Dept explaining status of Other Support being finalized.
- **F** inancial interest reports (FIRS) for all COI investigators. SOM will notate in the SPOT record if not all COI Investigators have FIRs with "last updated" dates that are current (typically updated May 10th of each year or soon after). If all FIRs are not up to date by submission time, DSP will not submit. See: "Date FIR Last Updated" report at https://rams.research.vcu.edu to check investigator FIR statuses before the PI routes in RAMS-SPOT.
- **E** ligibility - PI eligibility and/or VCUHS employee sign off as applicable. SOM will return the Funding Proposal if all PI, Department, and School level signatures are not complete.
- **W** aiver -F&A, as applicable (for exemptions 2 and 3). SOM will return the Funding Proposal if all PI, Department, and School level signatures are not complete.

II.   **SOM Guidance: PI Timelines for Requesting Research Administration Support**

Table below outlines the advanced notice that should be provided to RA or other department staff in assisting with proposal development support.

Adhering to the timelines above will help ensure university policy is followed for routing proposals in a timely fashion (see Section I. above) and allow staff supporting proposal submissions sufficient time

Submission Type	Subawards	Clinical Trial/ Research	Multi-Component	Training Grant	Notify RA support
Routine Submission - basic	No	No	No	No	4 weeks
Routine Submission - moderate	Maybe	No	No	No	6 weeks
Program, Center, Multi-Component Submission - complex	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	No	16 weeks
VCU Lead - Clinical Trial/Research Proposals	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	No	16 weeks
VCU Sub - Clinical Trial/Research Proposal	No	Yes	Maybe	No	12 weeks
Training Grant - Includes Data Table Support	No	No	No	Yes	16 weeks
Training Grant - No Data Table Support	No	No	No	Yes	12 weeks

to provide optimal support to investigators *prior to* routing for approval in RAMS-SPOT.

- **Routine Submissions - Basic**: Include routine federal grant mechanisms: R01, R21, F series, etc. plus supplements, foundations, state agencies, etc. Submission *does not* include subawards or other support documents.
- **Routine Submissions - Moderate**: Include above granting mechanisms/sponsors when subawards to other institutions are planned. Moderate submissions also include other

sponsors such as DoD or NSF that require other support documentation at the time of proposal submission.

- **Program, Center, Multi-Component Submissions**: Complex funding mechanism, often cooperative agreements vs grants; NIH P series (ex – P20, P30, P50), NIH U series (ex - U01, U54).
    - o Large scale, administratively complex projects often have multiple projects, cores, and subrecipients that must be budgeted for individually. This requires significantly more time to coordinate and develop the administrative, programmatic, and financial plan for the proposal.
    - o Faculty should work with their RA to closely review the funding opportunity announcement, discuss project scope (including the number of external partners by component), and then determine when budgets should be in final form in accordance with proposal complexity (e.g., 3 weeks to 4 weeks in advance of the sponsor deadline).
- **VCU Lead – Clinical Trial/Research Proposal** – all sponsors. Additional time is necessary to conduct cost analysis on the protocol and/or schedule of events for accurate budgeting. Also, often involves subaward coordination for participating sites.
- **VCU Sub – Clinical Trial/Research Proposal** – all sponsors. Additional time is necessary to conduct a cost analysis on the protocol and/or schedule of events for accurate budgeting.
- **Training Grants** – Require additional lead time for preparation due to their requirements. Additional lead time is needed for research administration if support in populating required tables is needed.

Proposal Budgets & Prior Approvals Impacting Budget

- Faculty should begin assessing their proposed projects for cost and working with their Research Administration or other staff as soon as possible on budget development.

- **Budgets must be in final form when the PI routes for internal approvals** *(7 business days prior to a sponsor deadline)*.

    - o Including <u>final</u> subaward budgets and with subaward institution approvals.
    - o Also includes any required SOM pre-approvals for voluntary cost share, or waivers or reductions to F&A rates, as budget will be impacted if approval is not granted.
    - o Request for special approvals impacting budget should be submitted to SOM no later than 3 weeks prior to a sponsor published deadline. SOM requires at least 5 business days to review such requests. Proposals should not be routed prior to special approvals being received.

Failure to Follow Timeline Guidance:

- Reduces the level of support that can be provided, thus increasing chances for error or omissions.
- Data on timeliness of routing proposals in RAMS-SPOT will be monitored and provided to Chairs. Repeated non-compliance may impact performance ratings.
- As noted above, could result in proposals not being approved for submission.

Questions?

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